

# PEOPLE & THINGS

ONE of the most ingenious things of its kind, in the last war, was the Venlo Incident in which two British officers were kidnapped, in November, 1939, and taken across the Dutch-German border.

No doubt it was with this exploit in mind that Hitler later gave the originator of the Venlo Incident, the late General Walter Schellenberg, a more difficult assignment: nothing less than the abduction of the Duke of Windsor from the villa in which he was staying on the Estoril, prior to taking up his appointment as Governor of the Bahamas.

Schellenberg was perhaps the most dashing of all German intelligence officers; but I hear that his private papers, which are being prepared for publication by Mr. André Deutsch, throw a melancholy light upon this particular venture.

## Ingenuities

HE did his best, of course. An elaborate network of agents (including a serviceable Japanese) reported on the contents, lay-out, and administration of the villa. Conversations at the dinner-table were reported down to the last comma. Windows were broken in the hope of inducing a general panic, but all in vain. ("He was an Englishman, after all," the General noted later.)

Eventually he could save his face by reporting that the Portuguese police had surrounded the villa in such force that no coup could possibly succeed. Not long afterwards, the would-be kidnapper climbed to the top floor of the German Embassy in Lisbon. From there he swept the harbour and the mouth of the Tagus with his binoculars; and what did he pick up with his Zeiss lenses? The embarkation of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and their orderly departure for the Bahamas.

He confesses to having been, if anything, rather relieved.

## Mr. Berlin's Mondays

I DOUBT if London has been offered, in recent years, a better free entertainment than the four Northcliffe Lectures delivered at University College by Mr. Isaiah Berlin. The subject (Russian literature in the 1840s) is one of those nearest to Mr. Berlin's heart; and I was not surprised to note, last Monday afternoon, that this Farinelli of the lecture-room was accorded, after his final cadenza, an ovation more appropriate to the opera-house than to the Gower Street Anatomy Theatre, where the benches are penitentially hard and the visitor is greeted on arrival by a row of crouching skeletons.

Those who remember the extempore lectures which Mr. Berlin gave last year on the Third Programme will learn with relish that the Northcliffe Lectures were recorded, on the spot, for retransmission by the B.B.C. Listeners will miss, of course, the peculiar fixity of Mr. Berlin's gaze, as he re-creates with warm personal affection the predicaments of

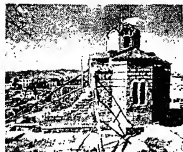
## By ATTICUS

Herzen. Nor will they see him throw back his head, like a sealion in search of a high-thrown mackerel; but they will learn once again how it is possible to preserve, within a scrupulous academical framework, the wit and high courtesy of private conversation.

## Heavy Rescue

MOST visitors to Athens concentrate, as is only natural, on the monuments of the Hellenic era. But Athens has also an exemplary Byzantine museum, and one of the loveliest examples of Byzantine church design is accessible to anyone who can whisper the name "Kapnikarea" into his taxi-driver's ear.

I now hear that another church of this period has been revealed as



a result of work carried out by American archaeologists in the Agora. This is the eleventh-century Church of the Holy Apostles. In its earliest form it was shaped like a Greek cross, with a central dome supported by four columns, and apses on all four sides.

In the nineteenth century the interest of its design was obscured by a mammoth addition to the west end; but now, with the help of the Kress Foundation, this has been removed and, as may be seen from this photograph, the remains of the church stand free.

This part of the Agora has proved unusually fruitful ground for the archaeologist, since the church is built on the ruins of a mint which dates from the fifth century a.c. and has yielded a vast treasure of unminted silver coins.

## Whistleriana

AT least one department of the Tate Gallery has been unaffected by recent controversies and remains, now as always, a firm favourite with visitors: the mural paintings by Rex Whistler in the gallery's restaurant.

These murals date, of course, from the springtime of Whistler's career (they were painted in 1926-27) and they have not the luxuriant fancy of his decorations at Plas Newydd and Mottisfont. But in place of these is a fund of delicate invention which has sometimes baffled casual observers. What we needed, in short, was a crib; and the Trustees have now provided one (price 1s. 6d.)—in the shape of the late Edith Olivier's narrative of the "Expedition in Pursuit of Rare Meats." This opusculum illuminates much that is cryptic in the delectable

sequence; and it can stand as an entertainment, choice if diminutive, on its own. There are local jokes in it, but many beyond the boundaries of Wiltshire will enjoy the adventures of the strange and often recognisable characters in the Whistler-Olivier drama. Nor is there lacking a hint or two for those who now so efficiently run the restaurant—references, for instance, to "flacons of rare old wines, and hampers of granadillas, mangoes, pomegranates and cantaloupes, as well as earthenware jars of honey made from peach and orange blossom."

Same again, please, Miss.

## Desirable Remnants

THE Lord Mayor's Banquet is, I believe, one of the most popular of television spectacles; but I was reminded, on glancing through an illustrated magazine of the period, that only fifty years ago it was popular for quite a different reason.

It was then customary for the remains of the feast to be distributed on the following day to the respectable poor. (A photograph shows these deserving ladies, each cloaked and tippetted, in the act of fling past the debris.) But one detail in the text reveals how comparatively unsophisticated, in those days, was our taste in food; for the author, recording that turtle soup was not always welcome, remarks that "the taste for it, like that for tomatoes, must be acquired."

## The Vacant Throne

THE political column on the leader page of the "New York Times," for which Anne O'Hare McCormick was responsible till her death in May of this year, was one of the most distinguished and responsible pieces of journalism ever to go into a newspaper.

I learn that the position she made so famous on that page has just been handed over to C. L. Sulzberger, who has been chief foreign correspondent of the "New York Times" for the past ten years and is a nephew of the publisher of the paper—Arthur Hays Sulzberger.

When "Cy" Sulzberger joined the London Bureau of his paper in 1939 he quickly made as many friends in England as he made enemies among his foes (Mussolini's chief propagandist called him "a creeping tarantula, going from country to country spreading poison").

Anne O'Hare McCormick was one of the handful of journalists in the world who have real influence. Sulzberger will certainly be another.

## Bulk Purchase

APROPOS, with the usual winter advertising boom, today's "New York Sunday Times" will weigh 4 lb., contain 368 pages and be just under two inches thick. This explains why, last Sunday, an American staying at the Savoy walked up to the bookstall upon which there was a pile of about two dozen copies of our own Sunday Times, put down 3d., picked up the familiar pile of newspaper and walked off with the whole heap under his arm.